

Paper #1 assignment: Managers, values, and organizational environments

This first part of the course has set the stage by exploring several broad theoretical concepts that relate values, public managers, and the organizations in which they work. This paper assignment provides you with an opportunity to consider these broad conceptual ideas in a particular context.

1. Paper topic options

Option A. Agency analysis

Select a government agency. This may be one we have discussed or read about in class, or another of your choosing—perhaps a place you are thinking about interning with this summer or a place you have worked in the past. Your agency can operate at the local, state, or national levels (either in the United States or elsewhere). You may pick a particular component of a big agency—i.e., a specific bureau in a federal department—or address an agency as a whole. Finally, stick with agencies associated with individual governments, not non-profit groups or multinational groups like NATO or the UN.

After selecting your agency, write a paper in which you analyze an aspect of the agency's work using some of the broad theoretical concepts we have identified. This analysis could take several different forms, including but not limited to:

- Use our theoretical readings to help you identify and describe some of the key management challenges the agency faces.
- Identify and describe one particular management challenge and suggest insights that public managers in the agency could derive from some of our theoretical concepts to help them address this challenge.
- Use Moore's ideas to consider how managers in the agency try to create public value. Then draw on Wilson or O'Toole and Meier to describe why that particular conception of public value may be easy or difficult for managers in the agency to produce.
- Suggest two or three different ways that public managers in the agency could possibly define public value (regardless of whether they define it that way or not). Rank these definitions from relatively easiest to achieve to most difficult for managers to achieve, and explain your rankings.
- Other ideas . . . ?

Option B. Case analysis

Relate some of the general theoretical concepts we have explored to the Tsunami readings and/or the reading from Pressman and Wildavsky, *Implementation*. Possible angles include:

- How do some of the general concepts we have explored help to explain the public management aspects of the Tsunami cleanup or the situation in Oakland that Pressman and Wildavsky uncovered?

- To what extent could one argue that the Tsunami response and the Oakland experience that Pressman and Wildavsky describe really convey similar lessons about public managers and management?
- Based on some of the general concepts we have explored, what predictions would you make about the public management dimensions of the Tsunami response as it moves forward into the future?
- If the public managers featured in Pressman and Wildavsky's account had read James Q. Wilson or Mark Moore's work, how might they have approached their work differently?
- Other ideas . . . ?

2. Formatting

Please set up your paper according to the following parameters. These guidelines will help me to read and comment on your work.

- The paper should be 5-6 double-spaced pages.
- Use one inch margins on all sides.
- Set your font to 12 point, and use Times New Roman, Garamond, or something similar.
- Number your pages.

In documenting your sources, choose a method that would allow the reader to track down your sources if need be. Several citation methods can work—feel free to pick one that gets the job done. Just be sure to use the method consistently and clearly.

3. Grading

I will evaluate the papers using the A to F scale listed in the course syllabus, and will base grades on the following general criteria.

Thesis, focus, and responsiveness. The essay contains on the first page a clearly identifiable, specific, crisply-stated thesis. Overall, the thesis and ensuing paragraphs in the essay clearly address the option you have chosen without flying off onto unrelated tangents.

Theoretical concepts. The essay is explicitly grounded in key theoretical concepts we have explored in class, and makes explicit citations to the theoretical readings in an analytically sharp and accurate way.

Concrete examples. The essay makes frequent use of concrete examples, which help to reveal and clarify the meaning of the theoretical concepts.

Quality of the prose. The essay's language is clear, direct, concise, and avoids passive voice. The voice of the author dictates the essay's tempo, rather than lengthy direct quotations or extensive summaries from readings. The author has read the essay carefully to eliminate errors or inconsistencies in grammar, spelling, and citation of sources.